



# Councilman Phil Andrews Reports to District Three

Derwood, Gaithersburg, North Potomac, Rockville, Washington Grove

## Valuing Education

Our County's greatest strengths are its highly educated residents and commitment to outstanding educational opportunity. As a graduate of our County's public schools, I am mindful of their central role in the success of our County.

In the past two years, **the County Council approved \$40 million for the Reading Initiative, enabling the school system to reduce class size to no more than 15 students per teacher in all first and second grade reading classes.** The Council also provided funding to expand the number of high-need schools with all-day kindergarten, and to offer salaries and professional development opportunities to attract and retain outstanding teachers.

Responding to rising construction costs, the Council approved additional funding to keep school capital projects on schedule. In District 3, this included Wootton High School's addition and Mill Creek Towne Elementary's renovation. The Council also increased support for Montgomery College, which enrolls more than 50,000 students annually.

In addition to traditional services, County libraries provide free access to the Internet and basic Internet training. I worked to secure Council funding to complete a new and much larger Rockville Regional Library in Town Center by 2003. Also in District 3, the renovated Twinbrook Library is open, the new Quince Orchard Library is well-used, and a new after-school program is underway at Gaithersburg Library.

Dear Neighbor,

As your representative on the County Council, I work for you. This annual report describes what I've done. In the past year, I led the effort that cut Ride-On bus fares by 44 percent. I wrote the first local law in the Nation that protects employees from genetic discrimination in the workplace. I sponsored the law that prohibits the County from charging homeowners a fee for paying property taxes semi-annually. And I helped lead the successful campaigns to accelerate plans for building a new Rockville Library and a North Potomac Community Center.

As chair of the Public Safety Committee, I'm leading efforts to reduce reckless driving, improve pedestrian safety, review substance abuse programs, and strengthen our response to domestic violence. I'm also working to ensure a smooth transition to a new public safety radio and mobile data system, a new 911 center, and a sixth district police substation serving Gaithersburg, northern Derwood, and Washington Grove.

The County Council affects your quality of life in many ways. We approve budgets for schools, libraries, police and fire and rescue services, transit and County roads, recreation, and parks. We set tax rates that fund most of these services. We review County programs to make sure they work the way they're supposed to. We pass County laws and approve master plans that guide land-use decisions (except in some municipalities, such as Gaithersburg, Rockville, and Washington Grove).

It is an honor and high responsibility to represent you on the Council, and I value hearing from you. Together, we can make our wonderfully diverse County an even better place to live.

*Phil Andrews*

## New and Continuing Initiatives

### Prohibiting a Fee on Property Taxes

It's wrong for government to charge a fee for the timely payment of taxes. Even with the semi-annual option for property tax payments, the County receives all taxes due in the first half of the fiscal year. That's why I sponsored the law that prohibits the County from levying a fee on taxpayers who choose to pay property taxes semi-annually.

### Working for a Living Wage

Many hard-working people in our County are poor because they are paid low wages. The severe decline in the purchasing power of the Federal minimum wage has harmed these workers. The current minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour is only \$10,300 per year. In 1968, the minimum wage was worth \$8.05 per hour (\$16,100 per year) in current dollars—a difference of nearly \$6,000 in annual salary.

A recent study by the Montgomery County Community Action Board found that the self-sufficiency standard for a family of four in our County is \$49,668.

Two wage earners in such a family must average \$11.76 per hour. Many full-time workers in our County, however, make much less. For example, many workers who care for the developmentally disabled make about \$7 per hour—\$14,000 per year. Organizations that provide these services are urging the State to increase wages for direct care workers from \$6.79 to \$9.50 per hour.

**Low wages aren't just bad for employees and their families. Taxpayers end up paying for public assistance when employers pay workers less than they need to live.**

Our County needs to ensure that tax-dollars aren't used in a way that perpetuates poverty or high employee turnover. That's why I've led the fight for living wages for County contractors. No one working under a County contract should make a poverty-level wage. The increase in the number of working poor in our County requires action.

### Protecting Workers from Genetic Discrimination

A person shouldn't have to choose between taking a genetic test that could save his or her life and avoiding a genetic test in order to keep his or her job. That's why I sponsored the new law that prohibits employers from discriminating against job applicants and employees because of their genetic code or because of an employer's assumptions about an individual's chances of developing a disease because of his or her family medical history.

The increasing accuracy and availability of genetic tests and treatments are remarkable developments that will help save and extend many lives. However, these advances increase the temptation for employers to reduce health care costs by using genetic tests to screen out applicants who have a predisposition to a genetic illness—even when there is no question about an applicant's ability to do the job. That's wrong.

Montgomery County is the first local jurisdiction in the United States to provide this important protection for job applicants and employees. It is appropriate that the County leading the world in biotechnology is also at the forefront in preventing the misuse of genetic information.

The Montgomery County Human Relations Commission is responsible for enforcing this law and other anti-discrimination laws. The Commission's telephone number is 240-777-8462.

### Conserving the Environment: Legacy Open Space

Development threatens many areas of outstanding environmental quality in our County. In response to a recommendation from the Planning Board, the Council unanimously approved spending \$33 million over six years to protect open space. The first property purchased was the 215-acre Bucklodge Forest near Boyds.

The Planning Board has compiled a list of sites that have great environmental or historic merit, and that urgently need protection. One of their goals is to connect these sites with interconnected trails like the Seneca Greenway Trail, a 26-mile natural surface trail being built by volunteers, which will link the C&O Canal Towpath to a trail planned along the Patuxent River.

### Preserving Affordable Housing

We must preserve our stock of affordable housing and keep it in good condition. I led the move on the Council that funded major renovations of the Emory Grove and Washington Square public housing communities on Route 124.

Many tenants have been hard hit by large rent increases because of the tight rental market. I worked to ensure that the interests of renters were treated fairly when the Council rewrote the Landlord-Tenant Law. If you'd like a copy of the new law, call my office at 240-777-7906.

### Keeping Tobacco from Kids

To help keep tobacco products away from children, I cosponsored the law requiring stores selling tobacco products to display them out of reach of customers. Studies show that tobacco products are among the most shoplifted items. Since youth under 18 may not purchase tobacco, and most smokers start before the age of 18, it's good sense to make it more difficult for young people to obtain tobacco products.

# Transportation

## Addressing Traffic Congestion

We need a balanced approach which includes transit, road, and intersection improvements, and incentives for using transit, telecommuting, commuting during off-peak hours, and carpooling.

One of my first actions after taking office was to lead the successful effort to end Pay and Go, a policy that made traffic worse by allowing developers to build in

**The County Council supports transit, road, and intersection improvements that will make a difference now for our residents.**

areas under moratoria because of congestion. Land use planning that promotes sprawl increases congestion, reduces green space, and requires expensive new schools, roads, fire stations, and other public facilities.

I support transit-oriented development, and initiated the funding for major design charrettes that were held with the community to plan appropriate future development at the Shady Grove and Twinbrook Metros that is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

A major light rail transit project or dedicated busway—the Corridor Cities Transitway—is planned to address congestion along the I-270 corridor between the Shady Grove Metro and Clarksburg. We need to persuade the State to build it as soon as possible. In the meantime, the County will build another garage at Shady Grove Metro which will add 1,600 parking spaces by the end of 2002.

To help address east-west congestion, Norbeck Road is being extended from Layhill Road to Spencerville Road, Shady Grove Road will be widened next year, and the Council will consider widening Muncaster Mill Road to four lanes.

This is a better approach than building the \$1 billion Inter-County Connector (ICC) highway. **The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rejected the ICC**

**during the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations because of the severe and irreparable harm it would cause our environment.** In addition, the State Highway Department found that the ICC would worsen congestion on Shady Grove Road between Route 355 and Muncaster Mill Road.

Along with the Governor and County Executive, the County Council unanimously opposes a second highway and Potomac bridge crossing into our County. This highway would cause sprawl and reduce open space by promoting development in outlying areas. It would either cut through our Agricultural Reserve or through densely populated communities. Instead, we should continue to attract more high-tech jobs to the I-270 corridor and accelerate local road and transit projects.

Numerous County and State road, transit, and intersection improvements are underway or imminent. If you would like a map, call my office at 240-777-7906.

If you are interested in carpooling, call Commuter Services at 301-565-5870. They will help you find a match.

## Slashing Ride-On Bus Fares

We all benefit from fewer cars on the road when more people take Ride-On or Metro. That's why I proposed a dramatic cut in Ride-On bus fares. Riders who buy a pass rather than pay by the ride (\$1.10 in rush hour) save more than \$300 per year. Passes may be bought at Giant, at libraries, at transit stores and on-line.

Improving the convenience of bus service is also important. The Council

**The 20-trip Ride-On bus pass and the two-week pass are now only \$10 (down from \$18)—an average of just 50 cents per ride.**

provided funding to increase bus service on heavily used routes and to add routes. We need more benches and shelters also.

With over 4,000 stops in Montgomery County and 20 million rides per year, Ride-On gets people where they need to go. For information about Ride-On schedules, fares and routes, call 240-777-5800 or visit [www.dpwt.com/](http://www.dpwt.com/).

## Improving Major County and State Roads In District 3

**Norbeck Road:** construction underway that will extend Norbeck Road 3.5 miles from its current terminus at Layhill Road to Spencerville Road, creating a straight east-west connection between Rockville Pike and I-95.

**Darnestown Road:** widened to four lanes between Riffle Ford Road and Muddy Branch Road with a noise wall in some sections, and to six lanes from Muddy Branch Road to Great Seneca Highway, beginning spring 2001.

**West Diamond Avenue:** reconstructed from I-270 to Muddy Branch Road beginning fall 2001.

**Shady Grove Road:** widened to six lanes throughout from Muncaster Mill Road to I-370 and a sidewalk added starting spring 2002. A noise wall is needed.

**Redland Road:** widened to four lanes from Crabbs Branch Road to Needwood Road beginning summer 2002.

**Travilah Road:** reconstructed from Darnestown Road to Dufief Mill Road to improve safety and add a sidewalk beginning spring 2003.

**Clopper Road:** widened from Metropolitan Grove Dr. to I-270 starting mid-2003.

**Muncaster Mill Road:** realigned to improve safety starting summer 2003.

# Public Safety

## Improving Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

The greatest threat most of us face each day is getting hit by a vehicle. Each year, many more County residents are killed or injured by a car than by a weapon. **In the past year at 15 County intersections, more than 30,000 vehicles have been photographed running a red light.**

To deter red-light running, I support installing cameras at more intersections and raising the fine for running a red light. I've worked for State legislation to substantially increase the fine for running a red light, and persuaded the Council to endorse the initiative.

Pedestrians, as well as motorists, need to obey right-of-way laws. Cross at crosswalks, and wear clothing that reflects light if you are walking when it is dark.

**Car seats are essential to protect kids, but difficult to install correctly. The County provides free help with installation. Call 240-777-3660.**

Improving the design of some County and State roads is needed too. After the landscaping truck crashed into the school bus on Muncaster Mill Road, I helped organize the town meeting at Magruder High School with State officials to help community members be heard, and to drive home the need for

action by the State to improve the road's safety. I'm pleased that the State quickly made several interim safety improvements, and that the Governor has committed \$10.8 million to straighten the road to make it safer. More remains to be done, and I'll stay on the case.

In addition to more enforcement of traffic laws and safer driver, bicyclist and pedestrian behavior, the County needs to design communities with pedestrians in mind. At my initiative, sidewalks will be

**Children, frail elderly, people with disabilities, and bus riders need sidewalks to get where they need to go safely.**

built on the south sides of Needwood Road between Deer Lake Road and Oak Meadow Drive in summer 2001, and Shady Grove Road between Crabbs Branch Way and Muncaster Mill Road when the road is widened beginning in 2002. I also support adding noise barriers along Shady Grove Road to protect the quality of life of local residents.

If sidewalks are dangerous or impassable because of snow or ice, children who must walk to school and other pedestrians are forced to walk in the street.

**Sidewalks need to be made safe to use within a reasonable period of time after a snowstorm.**

Howard County, Prince George's County, and Baltimore County, and the Cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville require all property owners to take responsibility for clearing snow from the sidewalk next to their property. Our County should as well. We can match up volunteers with those relatively few homeowners who are both physically unable to shovel snow and also cannot afford to hire someone to do it for them.

## Strengthening our Response to Family Violence

Domestic violence is a serious problem in our County. Police wrote reports on more than 1,500 incidents last year. Children in families with domestic violence often grow up to become abusers themselves or victims of abuse in adult relationships.

The Council provided funding to strengthen victim services, hire more prosecutors, coordinate timely sharing of information among criminal justice agencies about dangerous offenders, and improve emergency response. If you need help, call 240-777-4195 or 301-315-4673.



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